

Appl. No. 09/683,370
Amdt. dated July 20, 2005
Reply to Office Action of March 22, 2005

Remarks

The present amendment responds to the Official Action dated March 22, 2005. The Official Action rejected claims 1-9 and 11-19 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Yehuda U.S. Patent No. 6,266,683 ("Yehuda"). The Official Action rejected claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Yehuda in view of Stremler U.S. Patent Publication No. 2004/0133489 ("Stremler"). These grounds of rejection are addressed below following a brief discussion of the present invention to provide context. Claims 1, 6 and 11 have been amended to be more clear and distinct. Claims 1-19 are presently pending.

The Present Invention

A process according to one aspect of the present invention preferably comprises collecting and evaluating information relating to the quality of performance of a process. A process to be evaluated is examined to identify the different process steps required by the process. Information useful in evaluating one or more process steps and of the overall process is collected. The evaluation information is preferably processed to form a collection of evaluation information documents, with each evaluation information document including evaluation information relating to quality of performance of one or more process steps or of the overall process. The evaluation information documents are stored in electronically retrievable format. A description of each process step is created and the process step descriptions are organized into a process description comprising a sequence of process step descriptions. Links within the process description to appropriate evaluation information documents, with each link retrieving an

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evaluation information document associated with the link upon activation of the link. The process description is stored in electronically retrievable format.

The Art Rejections

All of the art rejections hinge on the application of Yehuda, standing alone or in combination with Stremler. As addressed in greater detail below, Yehuda and Stremler do not support the Official Action's reading of them and the rejections based thereupon should be reconsidered and withdrawn. Further, the Applicants do not acquiesce in the analysis of Yehuda and Stremler made by the Official Action and respectfully traverse the Official Action's analysis underlying its rejections. Additionally, it is not admitted that Stremler is in fact prior art, but rather than undertake to swear behind it, Applicants choose at this time to distinguish it.

The Official Action rejected claims 1-9 and 10-19 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Stremler. In light of the present amendments to claims 1, 6 and 11, this ground of rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1, as amended, claims collecting evaluation information related to one or more process steps and of an overall process. The evaluation information provides insight into quality of performance of one or more process steps or of the overall process. The evaluation information includes information comparing specified aspects of instances of performance of a process step or of the overall process against predetermined standards for performance. Claim 1 further claims processing the evaluation information to form a collection of evaluation information documents. One or more evaluation information documents presents evaluation information showing how well one or more process steps or of the overall process has been

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performed, as compared against the predetermined standards. These limitations in the claimed combination are not taught by Yehuda.

Yehuda teaches a system for document management and review. Yehuda allows for division of a document into segments and association of comments with document segments or with the document as a whole. Yehuda does not teach that comments or other evaluation information include comparisons of instances of performance against predetermined standards for performance. Instead, Yehuda simply allows a reviewer to enter comments in a free form manner, with the comments being associated with designated document segments or with the document as a whole. Yehuda includes facilities for storage of comments so that they can be easily retrieved and reviewed, and allows a reviewer of a document segment to easily identify and retrieve comments associated with the segment.

However, Yehuda does not teach that comments will include comparisons against performance standards, and such comparisons are not common in review of documents. Typical comments made by a reviewer of a document include suggestions for changes to the form or content of the document, rather than an indication of whether or not the document or a portion of the document meets or falls short of some predetermined standard.

Claim 1, by contrast, relates to evaluation of performance of processes, and claims the collection of evaluation information which includes comparisons of aspects of instances of performance against performance standards. Such evaluation information allows for insight into whether or not specified aspects of performance of a process meet specified standards, and in

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many instances allows for a relatively straightforward determination of whether performance of the process is satisfactory.

For example, the performance of a process can be evaluated as to timeliness of performance of process steps, objectives met or not met, and so on. The document review process of Yehuda does not teach and does not make obvious such evaluations, which involve comparisons against standards rather than suggestions for revisions. Claim 1, as amended, therefore defines over the cited art and should be allowed.

Claim 6, as amended, claims retrieving a process description comprising a sequence of process step descriptions. The process description includes a plurality of links to evaluation information documents. Each document presents evaluation information relating to performance of a process step or of the overall process. The evaluation information provides insight into quality of performance of one or more process steps or of the overall process. The evaluation information includes information comparing specified aspects of instances of performance of a process step or of the overall process against predetermined standards for performance. As noted above with respect to claim 1, Yehuda does not teach evaluation information comparing specified aspects of instances of performance of a process step or of the overall process against predetermined standards for performance. Claim 6, as amended, therefore defines over the cited art and should be allowed.

Claim 11, as amended, claims an evaluation information database for storing a plurality of evaluation information documents stored in electronically retrievable format. Each document presents evaluation information relating to performance of a process step or of the overall

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process. The evaluation information provides insight into quality of performance of one or more process steps or of the overall process. The evaluation information includes information comparing specified aspects of instances of performance of a process step or of the overall process against predetermined standards for performance.

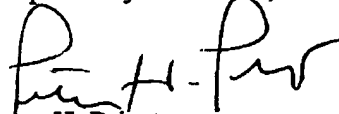
As noted above with respect to claim 1, Yehuda does not teach evaluation information comparing specified aspects of instances of performance of a process step or of the overall process against predetermined standards for performance. Claim 11, as amended, therefore defines over the cited art and should be allowed.

The Official Action rejected claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Yehuda in view of Stremmler. Claim 10 is a dependent claim having claim 1 as a base claim. Because claim 1 has been shown to be allowable, claim 10 should also be allowed.

Conclusion

All of the presently pending claims, as amended, appearing to define over the applied references, withdrawal of the present rejection and prompt allowance are requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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